



Dr Brendan Nelson

Director

14 June 2017

Mr David Sullivan
Secretary
Senate Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade Committee
Department of the Senate
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr Sullivan

I am writing to request a clarification of evidence to the Proof Committee Hansard for the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Legislation Committee of 30 May 2017.

On page 92 (extract attached) of the Proof Committee Hansard, the Chair, Senator Chris Back, asked if the original wheelhouse for the MV *Krait* was stored in the Memorial's warehouse, and if it would be rejoined to the vessel as part of its refurbishment.

At the time I advised the Chair that I thought the item was in storage and would be connected to the MV *Krait*.

However, following the Estimates hearings I received advice that the Memorial does not have a wheelhouse from the MV *Krait* in storage and that the one currently on the MV *Krait* will stay with the vessel as part of the conservation works project.

For your consideration, I seek the addition of the following statement as a footnote for clarification in the Proof Committee Hansard record:

The Australian War Memorial has clarified that it does not have a wheelhouse from the MV Krait in storage, and that the current wheelhouse on the MV Krait will stay with the vessel as part of the conservation works project.

Yours sincerely

Brendan Nelson

Dr Nelson: It is partly correct. It is out of the water at the moment. A lot of restorative work is currently being undertaken on the boat. That is progressing very well. We have between us and the Australian Army—and I thank Minister Payne who is here this evening for agreeing to a significant contribution from the Australian Army and the Chief of Army to assist in this restoration—about \$750,000 worth of work contributed by Army and, as I said, the Australian War Memorial and the National Maritime Museum. The planks in the whole of the vessel, which are essentially above the waterline, have needed to be replaced, with some of the framework and the upper decking so all of that work is being done.

We want to also take the configuration back to 1943, the wheelhouse and the other elements on the upper deck. That will cost us about another \$500,000 and we are currently trying to find ways of funding that. I can reassure you, Minister, we are not coming back to you. We are particularly looking at private sector donors in relation to this. Then the boat will go back into the water. So it will be back in the water. It will be back at the National Maritime Museum. It will have much better curation. It will be much easier for visitors to realise it is the MV *Krait* and also why it is so important to our history and our immense respect for these men and what they did.

The next part of the project, which is about a \$16 million project, which of course will require private fundraising, is then to get the boat out of the water for permanent display in a beautifully designed exhibition right on the water, internally, with Z Special and Special Operations Australia artefacts and relics around it at the Maritime Museum, so that is a second, much larger and more ambitious project which, in my very strong view, should happen. That \$16 million is a lot of money but in the scheme of other things I see in life and given the importance of this to our nation it is not a lot but, again, that is a private sector activity.

CHAIR: Thank you. If I am correct in my understanding, when we visited your warehouse—wherever it is in a part of Canberra that I do not know—the original wheelhouse, in fact, was stored out there so I just wonder whether or not (a) that is the case and whether it is to be rejoined with the vessel as part of this overhaul?

Dr Nelson: Unless Gen. Dawson is going to correct me, I think it is the case and it is our plan to reconnect it.

CHAIR: My final question, and I know you will be disappointed if I do not ask it—

Dr Nelson: Albany?

CHAIR: No. I am beyond Albany. Albany is going tremendously well. No, it is the last of the first three ASLAVs that went to Baghdad in 2003. I am just wondering if there are any plans yet for it to be brought back and placed at the War Memorial.

Dr Nelson: We do have the ASLAV prototype permanently on display now, alongside the Bushmaster and the Centurion tank, but I will have to ask either the assistant director or Gen. Dawson in relation to one of those three ASLAVs.

Mr Sullivan: We have a regular meeting with the ADF around objects that have been identified by curators, as well as deployed personnel, for return to Australia because of their heritage significance. I cannot swear that the particular ASLAV that you are talking about is one of those items that has been identified but we do have quite a number of objects, large technology objects, identified to be returned to Australia so I can find out. If you can provide the specific details of the one that you are considering I can give you advice on whether that is on our radar.

Senator GALLACHER: It might have something to do with the commander of it.

CHAIR: Three ASLAVs went in. Two were destroyed. There is only one left, as I understand, so I will try and do that. Can I thank you all very much, again, for your very comprehensive report and congratulate you on the work that is being undertaken on behalf of the Australian people at the War Memorial. It is truly an enormous success. That concludes our examination of the Australian War Memorial. Again, thank you for your attendance.